

Box 6

THE FUTURE OF BROTHERHOOD

—BY—

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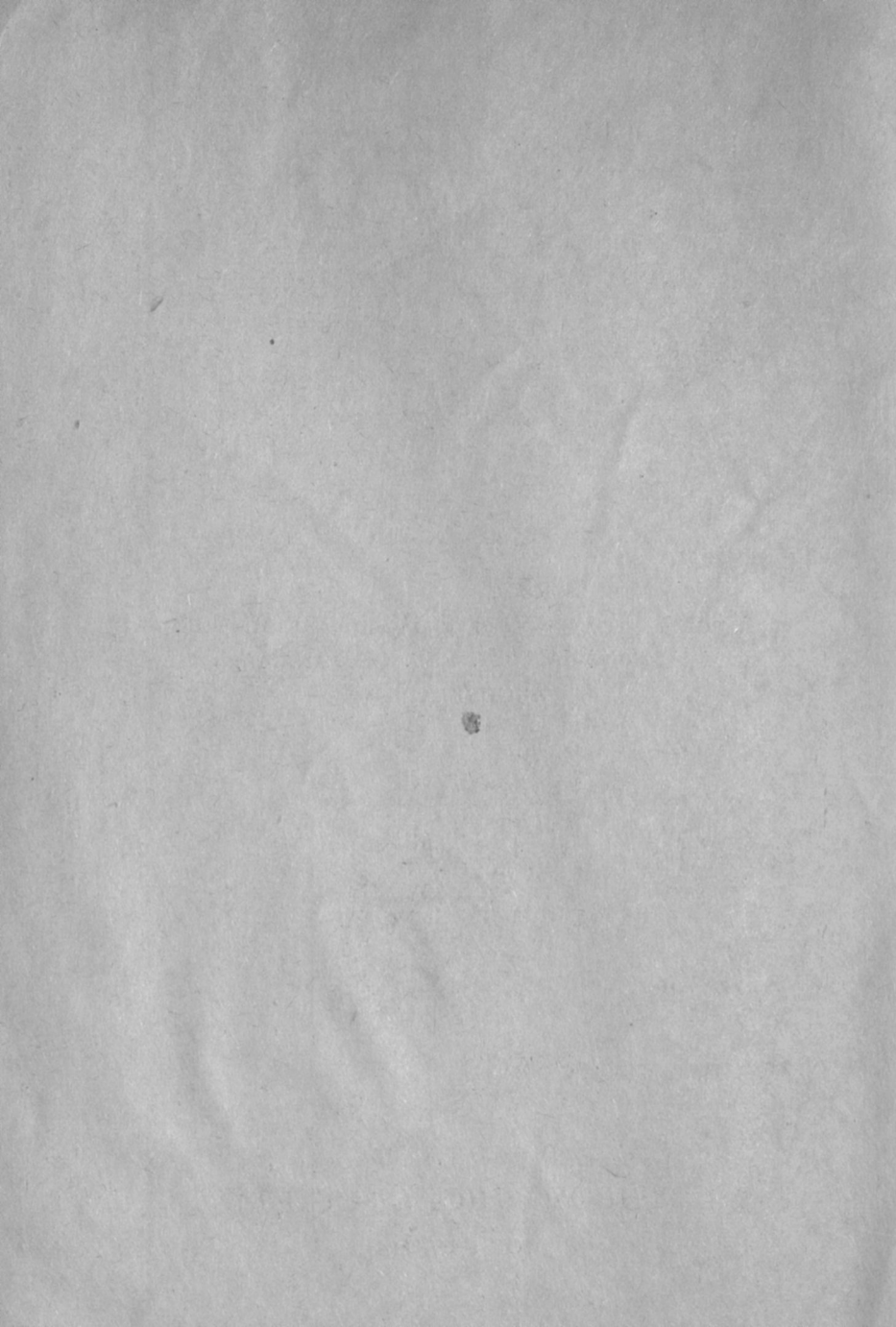
Past Vice-President of the Theosophical Society



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We are living today in a world torn between despair and hope. Our despair is due to many causes; the most serious of them is how to provide enough work for all. When I say "all," I mean the whole world. For therein lies our difficulty. For today all the countries are becoming highly organized with the same machines to produce the same things: the producers are increasing. But the purchasers are not increasing for want of employment. And then, there is everywhere, invisible, a great fear; it is the fear that our country may be invaded, that our supremacy may be challenged. It is the threat of war, and at all costs we must be ready to meet that threat.

It is these two causes—unemployment and the threat of war—which weigh down all nations, and contribute an element of despair to all our thinking.

Nevertheless, an element of hope enters also into our thinking—at least for those of us who try to understand what is happening outside the boundaries of our country. There was never an era so full of idealists as today. We find that, before the

great French Revolution, there was an era when many wrote treatises explaining how France and all humanity could be regenerated; for one writer then, there are hundreds today, if not thousands, and not in one country, but in all. If you were to go through a catalogue of all the publications of the world, you will be surprised at the number of publications which bear the word "international". The birth of the League of Nations in 1920 is itself a sign that we have at least one foot in a new world. We feel that, if someone could teach us how to be friends, brothers, there is enough wisdom in the best men and women of all the nations to put this world in order. Taking the world as a whole, there is enough money, which means power, for the work; there is no lack of intellect, for experts abound. Only, the **Will** to Good is not strong enough to curb the selfishness of the unscrupulous, nor tangible enough to assure those who are timid and doubtful.

Sad as is our present lot, there is not a journalist, a writer, a lecturer, or worker for social ser-

vice, who is not dreaming and hoping for a future. And through all their dreams there runs a golden thread; it is Brotherhood—Brotherhood not only within the nation, but throughout the whole world, excluding none, be he black or white or brown or yellow, including all, the criminal as the law-abiding, the poor as the rich, the peasant as the aristocrat.

I consider it is the duty of every man and woman of good will to give all possible aid to make of Brotherhood an active principle in our national and civic life.

And in order to suggest how it can be done, let me first describe to you two periods in the past when an attempt was made to make Brotherhood a reality.

The first attempt was that made twenty-six centuries ago by Gautama Buddha in India. When He began to preach His doctrines which today we term Buddhism, India had already developed strongly the idea of caste. Now, with the idea of caste goes another idea, that of being without caste, and it is the latter conception which brings cruelty in its train. For, so long as a man has caste, however low his caste may be, the radiations which emanate from his person are not considered to pollute another man of caste. Thus, the barber and the washerman are among the (very low castes, but still their emanations do not pollute. But in India, about one-tenth of the people are outcaste; they are the labourers of the fields, the sweepers who clean out the latrines, and similar workers largely in occupations which bring them in to contact with unclean things. A caste man must not touch anything touched by an outcaste, un-

til it has been disinfected by some religious ceremony of its impure emanations. This is the theory of caste.

But in practice it becomes often a very cruel denial of Brotherhood. For the outcaste is not allowed to worship with other Hindus in the temples—the temple will be polluted; he must not bathe in the tanks or rivers with caste people—the water will be polluted; he must not draw water from the well to which caste people go—the water will be polluted; he must not enter a caste house—the house will be polluted. In a hundred ways he is made to realise that from birth to death he carries with him a pollution which nothing can remove.

It was in the midst of these conditions that Buddha preached a message of Universal Brotherhood. He taught that the laws of suffering are the same for all, and therefore the laws of liberation are the same for all. He taught that a man becomes polluted only by evil thought and evil deed, and that the condition in which a man is born as a child matters not at all. These are his words:

"This is NOT what the Master has said:
That men become pure or impure according
as their
bodies are pure or impure."

"This IS what the Master has said:
That men become pure or impure according
as their
thoughts are pure or impure."

It was the negation of caste; it was the proclamation of Brotherhood.

Yet, strangely enough, Buddha did not deny caste; on the contrary. He insisted there was one caste to which all must qualify—the caste of the aristocrat.

In India, the highest caste is that of the Brahmin, the priest who intercedes to the Gods on be-

half of men; every male child born in a Brahmin family has by right the role of intermediary between God and man. Lower than the Brahmin comes the Kshattriya, the warrior; the lower still, the Vaishya, the merchant; and lastly, the Shudra, the artisan and craftsman.

Now, Buddha when preaching His doctrine of Brotherhood proclaimed a strange idea, that men are equals, not because there is no basis for any distinction of caste, but because they could all belong to the highest possible caste, that of the Brahmin. Again and again, Buddha makes clear that His standard is the Brahmin and then He emphasizes that no man is a true Brahmin because of his birth; he must become one by his conduct. Therefore, all men can reach the high standard of the Brahmin, if they will live a pure and noble life.

We find, then, that Buddha was a socialist, but He was a socialist who did not abolish aristocracy. On the contrary He broke down the barriers between the aristocrats and the people so that the people too could become aristocrats. Strange as His attempt may seem to us, yet the underlying idea of the aristocracy of us all is innate in our very constitution as Aryans. When the white conquerors, the ancestors of the present Hindus, swept down upon India from beyond the Himalayas, they called themselves "Aryas", the nobles. Every soldier, from commander to scout, every servant, all the women and children, in fact, all of the vast hosts who moved towards India to find a new home, were "Aryas"—nobles. Thus we find that Buddha, in proclaiming a Brotherhood of aristocracy for us all, revived a doctrine that was in the blood of the Aryan. But He went

further still; He proclaimed that all the outcastes of India, who have little or no Aryan blood in them, were also Aryas—nobles,—the equals of the best, provided they lived a righteous life.

The second great epoch when the ideal of Brotherhood was proclaimed was during the great French Revolution. Europe had lived for some twelve centuries under a feudal system which divided mankind into lords and serfs; whatever good the system possessed, in maintaining law and order and upholding civilization, faded away, and only the evil remained. The evil which it left was the conception of aristocrats who had only rights and no duties, and of the masses who toiled for them, who had only duties and no rights.

When the Revolution broke, it was like the awakening to activity of some volcano long dead. There is no need for me to describe any of the great events of the Revolution, except one event, which was the proclamation of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

It was a Fraternity imposed at the point of the sword. "Sois mon frère or je te tuerais"—"Be my brother, or I'll kill thee." It proclaimed an equality before the law of noble and peasant, by the simple process of abolishing the noble and making him the peasant.

The Revolution affected not France alone; it affected all Europe. More still, its effect is not yet over. For even today, in foreign lands, where the masses strive to break their chains, they sing the Marseillaise in token of defiance. The Revolution was inevitable for France. Yet one wonders if it, or any revolution like it, can ever usher in the Golden Age. It is not without a certain modicum of truth that one

writer has said that what the French Revolution achieved was to give to the masses "Liberté de faire du mal, Egalité de misère, Fraternité de Cain et Abel". (Liberty to do evil; Equality in misery; the Brotherhood of Cain and Abel.) But such a violent phase is only transitory, and is the reaction to an equally violent phase which precedes it. At any rate, the Revolution offered to the citizens of France the ideal of Brotherhood; it is true that it has never been realised in France, but the ideal remains.

It is that I want to emphasise; the ideal remains. Buddha did not succeed in abolishing caste; His religion passed from India to foreign lands to achieve its mission, but His ideal remains. Because, any ideal, once born in the heart of mankind, ever remains there; it cannot be stamped out. It may be covered over with neglect or contempt, but it will always remain waiting for its own time to come forth in its grandeur. The ideal of Brotherhood is waiting for its time, to reveal its grandeur and to become the driving power in the imagination of men. You and I must hasten the coming of that era. But how? To explain the method is my theme.

Our first action must be to discover the real significance of Man. Men exist on all sides of us; we have relations with them—in the city, in business, in the home. Yet the discovery of what Man really is escapes us. We do not realise what a wonderful mystery Man is; we have yet to come to the Greek standpoint which said: "Wonders are many, and nothing is more wonderful than man."

Have you considered that, in the religions, when they speak of God and describe Him, it is al-

ways in terms of man? It is only because a few men, the greatest and the wisest, have shown wonderful attributes, that we have said: "God must be like that." From Jesus Christ and the wonders of His humanity, the Christian soars upwards to the realisation of his God; from Shri Krishna and the wonders of His humanity, the Hindu rises to the realisation of his God. Everywhere it is the same; because of man we can believe that God exists.

We discover just a little of the wonder that is man when we love him. Then our whole being is transformed, and even in the darkest night light surrounds us. Think of the mother who loves her child, for whose sake no suffering is too great. To a mother who loves greatly, the child is nearer than God. Indeed, the child has become as a part of God, and she gives to her child an adoration which is not different in essence from the adoration which she gives to God. It is the same sometimes with a man who loves a woman greatly. For the time, the woman is to him endowed with the wonders of the Godhead; God is forgotten in her presence. It is such an idealisation of woman that has released great forces; Helen of Troy moved Greek battalions to war; Beatrice inspired the greatest poet of Europe; in India, the Taj Mahal was created because Mumtaz Mahal lived even after her death in Shah Jehan's brain. In us men and women, such as we are, there is still something wonderful, which can dazzle the eyes of another, and make him see a vision of Divinity.

This is the supreme fact which we must learn to understand; that man is not just a creature of flesh and bone, of many evil

passions and emotions and a few virtues. Though the worst of men is so near to the brute, yet there exists in him something exquisitely tender and beautiful. Sometimes an animal will see it in him and love him; sometimes a little child will see it, and put its little hand in trust in his. Why did Jesus not condemn Magdalen? Because He saw in her the saint waiting to be born.

It is this wonder that is in man that is so well understood in the philosophies of India; they call it Brahman, God. The mark of sainthood, in India, is that the saint sees Divinity shining from the face of every man, wise or ignorant, good or evil. It is Christianity, following the Jewish tradition, that has created a chasm between God who creates and man who is created. Eastern religions have always taught that life can be understood only when God and man are realised as a unity.

It is this fact, that Divinity resides in us all, that is the force behind the ideal of Brotherhood. We are brothers, because, in spite of all differences, we share a common heritage of greatness. I may be cultured, and my brother ignorant; we are brothers all the same. I may be a saint, and my brother may be the worst of men; we are still brothers. The difference between the saint and the sinner is like the difference between the brilliantly flashing diamond of many hues, and the rough diamond, without lustre, found embedded in the primordial clay. Give the rough diamond to the diamond cutter, and he will use his art upon it, and make it into a thing of beauty. The sinner too will be transformed into the saint, in the long process of

time that God employs in His schemes.

It is easy to believe all this concerning the person whom we adore; love makes us all poets, and a poet sees Divinity enshrined in all things. Nor is it difficult to realize that the grandeur in my friend, whom I admire and towards whom I feel intensely loyal, may have a divine element in it. But it is difficult to imagine that a similar grandeur exists in the ordinary men and women who move about me; it is impossible to believe that any such virtue can exist in my enemy, especially in the man of another nation who desires to conquer my native land. Yet the greatest truth which exists is that, in us all, in enemy and in friend, the same divine grandeur exists.

There is a fundamental axiom in Theosophy which proclaims that the highest attributes of power, benevolence and wisdom, which we postulate concerning God, exists latent in every man, without distinction of race, creed or colour. It is because all men partake of the same Divine Nature that they are as the children of one father and are therefore brothers. Whatever another may do to me, even if he kill me, he remains my brother still. It is true that he has broken the Law of Brotherhood in injuring me, but the Law remains, and through the suffering which he will reap, he will learn the greatness of the Law.

Our work as Theosophists is above all things to proclaim this message of Brotherhood. But we proclaim it not as an ideal, as some beautiful dream born in the imagination of tender-hearted men, but as a reality, as a law of nature. Just as by the law of gravity all of us are held to

the surface of the earth, in every place on its surface, so all of us are bound in the chains of one Brotherhood. To know ourselves as divine is the supreme task before us all. All else follows. When we have as our motto: "Divinity, Equality, Fraternity," Liberty follows as a consequence. For how should I ever dream of coercing my brother who shares my Divinity?

A complete reconstruction of our national and civic life is necessary, if we believe in this truth that each child, whether born of rich parents or poor, is more than a mere child of man, that is, that he is a Fragment of the Divine. We now think of civilisation as the process of transforming the savage into a civilised being, but we must think of civilisation as the process of transforming the human into the Divine. Some day, when all men accept the truth about man's mysterious nature, our statesmen will then make all policies strictly subordinate to one policy: how to call forth the Divinity hidden in each citizen. And we shall elect as our representatives in civic and national assemblies not men and women who talk well, or understand sanitation or finance, but men and women who are foremost in their understanding of the ways by which the Hidden God in man can be released.

In our policies today, we think of the citizen as an individual in a body that will die, and that is the end of it. That he is a soul, that as a soul he may need sustenance, guidance, inspiration, that problem our statesmen leave aside. It is handed over to the Churches. The result is that one of the greatest of our needs as souls, that is to say, an environment of beauty, is

not attended to by the Churches—indeed, they are hostile to such a conception—and the State leaves the matter to the artists. But since the artists are poor and have no political influence like the financiers, it is we the citizens who suffer.

Our civilisation cannot go on as it is; it must break down in a fierce commercial competition that inevitably ends in war, or it must change its basis. Science has taught every nation how it can arm itself. It is now merely a matter of a few decades before the savages of Africa will civilise themselves and have their arsenals to manufacture rifles and guns. Every country is feverishly ordering the latest machinery to produce goods to sell in other countries. There is only one end to such a type of civilisation—it is the crushing of the weak by the strong, the triumph of force.

We can change the spirit of civilisation, if we all dared to commit ourselves completely to the ideal of Brotherhood. If every nation took as its policy that of developing the sense of Brotherhood in its citizens, our greatest problem, that of armies and navies, would solve itself. But we do not yet fully trust in the ideal. That is because we have not yet been taught how to live it. We have congresses for peace and brotherhood; they are excellent in their way, but they are ineffective. You do not make men brothers by preaching to them, nor by giving them the best literature to read. You do not make brothers today even by religion—at least by such religions as exist today. The religions of today can still bring man near to God by their mystical teachings. But they have

somehow lost touch with man and so cannot bring all men together to work towards a common end. A small incident which seems to appear an insult to national honour will break into pieces the edifice of Brotherhood which we try to erect by our cultural propaganda.

It is by appealing to the Divine within us that we shall become brothers. For, the moment we realise even a little of our true greatness, we know that we must go on discovering more of that mystery. And the way of discovery is through love. We now doubt if love, tenderness, pardon, can ever be made the basis of policy. We think of love as a feminine virtue. But when we know that Divinity dwells in us, then we shall know that love is essentially masculine, that it is a power that both destroys and builds. Who have built more lasting empires, Alexander and Caesar, men of action, or Buddha and Jesus, men of love? Love too is dynamic and inspires to action.

How to make men love each other is the great problem. Though every religion inculcates a love of our neighbor, though the teaching of peace and tenderness is found in every religion, yet our religions today are incapable of calling out love in men. I know much of the religions of India and their effect on their adherents. I have lived in many countries of Europe and America, and know well the conditions of life in them. Therefore I can say without hesitation that the ministers of religion, both of the East and of the West, are scarcely listened to when they preach the doctrine of love. For love has been made

by them into a sentimental expression of our goodwill for certain occasions, like Christmas. The ministers of religion do not believe in love as a guiding principle; would they otherwise consecrate the battle-flags of one group of Christians going to slay another group of Christians? I know that today in certain Buddhist lands, like in Ceylon, Buddhist priests, the followers of Buddha who denounced caste, rigidly uphold caste, and will not accept as a disciple a man whom they consider of a low caste. They will not admit him to equality with themselves by conferring on him the yellow robe, the mark of the Buddhist monk. In India, the Brahmin priests will never consent to open their temples to pariahs. Sometimes, the outcastes in India become converts to Christianity, in order to raise themselves in the social scale, because as Christians they are not considered 'untouchable' by caste Hindus. But the Christian caste Hindus do not care to mingle with the outcaste Christians, and if you go to a Roman Catholic Church in India, you will see Hindu Christians of caste in one part, and pariah Christians in another. Even the Catholic Church accepts the idea of caste in India. What would Jesus Christ say, if He were to visit a Church in India? How then should we expect that laymen should be deeply influenced when from the lips of such priests, either of the East or of the West, a doctrine of peace and love is proclaimed? That love does not exist in their hearts, not as it should exist in the heart of a disciple of Christ, of Buddha or Krishna. When they speak to us, there is no power in them to move us. To

state the matter very briefly, it is very little aid that the religions of today can give us to call out the sense of Brotherhood in men. We must look for help elsewhere.

The help which we need has already begun to come to us from an unexpected direction. If the priests are failing us, there have come to take their place men and women—the ordinary men and women of the workaday world. It is from Man himself that help is coming. Let us note the manner of its coming.

The churches today complain that their congregations are small, but have you noted that our theatres and cinemas are crowded? Men do not read the Bible today, but do they ever fail to read the newspaper? Why do we turn from the church to the theatre, from the Bible to a novel? Because we are learning to discover something wonderful in man. We are curious to know how he lives, how he plays, and enjoys and suffers. We read newspaper and novels fascinated by the behaviour of men and women as they love and hate, as they succeed and fail. And all this curiosity of ours is not limited to men of our own race only; we want to know how men and women — white and brown, yellow and black—think and feel.

There is a strange phenomenon, which you will note if you study history carefully; it is that man's interest in life can be represented by a pendulum which swings to two extremes. You will find that there is a period when men are interested in the nature of God; they then frequent churches, listen to theologians, and find spiritual food for their souls in discovering the ways of communion with God. That is one extreme of

the pendulum. When, at the turn of the century, a well known French writer sent a manuscript to the REVUE DES DEUX MONDES, in which he raised the question of the existence of God, he received the monumental answer: *La question de Dieu n'est pas d'actualité.* (The subject of God is not a topic of interest today). This is the period of apathy, when there is not only scepticism about religion but a depreciation of human nature. Slowly the pendulum swings past the middle point. And then we find that men become interested in men. They are moved by the drama; they read books of travel; they form associations to study this or that aspect of human life and organization. The inspiration to idealism, which once they gained through belief in God, they are learning to find in the service of man. So men and women dedicate themselves to work for children, to work for the relief of suffering in every form, to brighten the lives of the poor, or of those in prison with concerts and plays.

This is the present stage in the world's history. It is the day of man; man holds the stage. That is why there is a great power which can be released today from the ideal of Brotherhood, if we will but proceed in the right direction.

What must you and I do? We must renounce our individualism, and discover a joy in working with others for a common purpose. There are many of us who will contribute money to good causes, but who do not care to join associations. While money is always necessary to meet the expenses of a work, that work is done, not by money, but by the sacrifice of the workers. It is the giving of ourselves that is

far more important than the giving of money. But we are somewhat afraid that our life will be made complicated if we join societies; for it means that we must accommodate ourselves to the idiosyncrasies of others. It is far easier to write a cheque and be done with it. Also, if the cause which we approve is unpopular, we do not like to face the ridicule of our friends; we would rather be idealists in secret than be laughed at by a scoffing public. Sometimes, too, we doubt whether associations can after all achieve so very much; their work seems so insignificant compared to the magnitude of the evil to be abolished.

All this wrong standpoint is due to the fact that the individualist has not yet discovered the joy of working with others; he has not realised that, if he must change his character to work in harmony with others, they in return release in him new capacities. Just as when flint strikes steel a spark of fire is emitted, which can create a great flame if some fuel is there, so is it when individuals meet together for a common work. Each releases in the other some strength, some understanding which were not manifest before.

And then, we must note that it is always a few who begin a great work. If the work they are doing really represents the fulfilment of humanity's needs, then the World-Spirit, or the Time-Spirit if you will, aids them. Think back to the time in Palestine when Jesus left His disciples. They were alone, and so very few. Nor were they of the ranks of the rich Jewish priests, or of the powerful Roman Nobles. How the Romans must have looked down upon the Christians with their teach-

ings that appeared to the Romans mere sentimental doctrines, useful to women but not a virile, imperial race. And how the intellectual Greeks must have despised the utter absence of philosophy in the Christian teachings. It surely was not an easy matter to be a Christian then and believe in a doctrine of love that admitted no pride of race, that required a master to sit at the same communion table with the slave. The Greeks and the Romans were utterly certain that their civilisations would last forever. Yet, within five centuries, it was the infant Christian civilisations which gained the day. For the Time-Spirit was with the Christian. The few triumphed and became the many.

If you will sacrifice something of your individualism and work with others, in such associations as attract your temperament, then, as I have said, you will grow in understanding and faculty. For the Time-Spirit of the world today is building for the future through groups of men, and not through only a few individual geniuses, as in the past. That is why I hold that Brotherhood has a great creative role to accomplish in the building of the better civilisation which we long for.

When you learn to work in small groups, then you will believe firmly that the work of betterment of the whole world can be done through large groups. You will then believe firmly in the final success of the work of the League of Nations, and not be a sceptic of its usefulness as so many are today. The League of Nations is the supreme symbol of the Future of Brotherhood in the world. For the first time in history, fifty seven nations meet together as

brothers, not as rivals, to discuss their affairs. Of course, they can achieve little in the beginning; they dispute interminably, and do not come to quick decisions. But why should we expect that a band of men should make a success of Brotherhood in the course of fourteen years, when for tens of thousands they have fought each other? The League of Nations will act swiftly when the nations represented in it learn to feel and think rightly. It is there that the weakness is; the League is weak because the nations are still backward in their ideas and still cling to useless forms. The critics of the League are those who belong to a world that is slowly dying, the world of cut-throat competition in business, of the solution of questions by force of arms.

The future of the world is in the hands of those who believe in Brotherhood, for Brotherhood is the reflection of the Time-Spirit who is dwelling in our midst. I have used this phrase "Time-Spirit" to describe an inner purpose in the world's affairs, a hidden direction. But such a hidden direction is not mechanical. There is nothing mechanical concerning the world's affairs, or the affairs of an individual. I believe utterly in what Christ said that not a sparrow falls but that our Father in heaven knows. In all the teaching which is called Theosophy, there is no idea of chance. It is of Law everywhere, and directed by the Mind of God. What we call the Time-Spirit is the manner in which God is trying to mould the world's affairs at any given epoch.

I have said that just now the world's pendulum is swinging from God to man. Yet in what-

ever direction the pendulum swings, it is always God who directs the work, through man. For He works, not alone, but through man. It is not only Christ who was His Messenger. Everyone of us is a Messenger of God. Christ was wonderful, and so were Buddha and Krishna, for in Their hearts all mankind seemed to dwell, while with you and me, it is only two or three whom we love deeply who dwell within us. Yet some day in the future, we too shall be great as they were.

It was Christ who said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me." That is the sublimest description of Brotherhood. For as we serve one of our brothers, we serve Him, and He was God. If in the name of friendship and Brotherhood, we help to diminish suffering and evil, we are laying our offering of service at the feet of Christ and of all the Great Ones of the world. It does not matter if we believe in Them or not. So long as we will work for Brotherhood, so long as we live as brothers, that is all that matters.

Yet, as we work, all the Great Ones of the world, who have ever lived and toiled for man, will be with us. You have in your religion this teaching: "the Communion of Saints." The Saints are ever with us, not alone the saints of Christianity, but of all the religions through the ages. One of the greatest adventures in life is to find the road to Them.

I see before me a great era when wars will cease, when the economic life of the world will be so adjusted by a Council of all the nations, that competition will cease, and yet the best goods will be produced, and there will be

employment for all. There is no reason why any single person in the world should starve, or be badly clothed, or be without a roof. The world taken as a whole is rich; it has all the knowledge it requires; all our miseries today are due to bad management. But the good management which we

need will not come by any miracle. We must create it. We shall create only by releasing in our hearts and minds the power latent there of Brotherhood. Let us but determine to be brothers, and then He who is the Father of us all will give us His Kingdom of Happiness for our heritage.

